Guest of Honour

Ken MacLeod

PR 2

NOVACON 36

Novacon 36

NOVACON 36, 10th – 12th November 2006

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CHAIRMAN'S BIT, TONY BERRY.

So, here we are at PR2 already. Seems like only yesterday etc…. Things are moving along, your intrepid committee is bravely working its way through mountains of beer and pizza during meetings, and we even have some ideas for a Programme. Dave Hicks has written some more detail on that.

I said last time that we are not having a disco this year, but for those of you who feel the need to have a bop, we will be providing the means for you to play CDs or MP3s if you want to bring them along. Besides, there is at least one 50th birthday to celebrate at the con (this could be ongoing now; myself and Alice Lawson are 50 next year. Bloody hell, a third of the way through my life. As if).

HOTEL. Booking forms are, as before, available from the website. Please book your room asap, especially if you want a single, since numbers are limited. If you have artwork to display/sell, contact Vicky Cook, if it's artwork on CD or DVD, contact Steve Lawson.

REFURB! Last year the Quality Hotel began a refurbishment, doing the function rooms and suites. This year they are doing all the bedrooms, the bar area and restaurant. Everything should be finished by the time we show up. And yes, they are buying new pillows.

SMOKING. As last year, there will be no smoking in any of the function space during the con. Just getting you used to the smoking ban – see how considerate we are?

Dealing with a difficult day

By Ken MacLeod

Yesterday I ran into a plot hole. I found that two pieces of information that connected to a third added up to a premature revelation. One of my characters, who runs a conspiracy website, was bound to put the two together - and if he didn't, there were others on the case, including the mainstream media. In my story, that story was breaking too soon.

(Yes, I have an outline. Yes, the story deviates from it. Sometimes you have to go with the story.)

Right now the story wasn't going anywhere. The usual displacement activities offered themselves. Go for a walk. Do some housework. Read. Snooze. What I did was go online and look at a moderately conspiratorial website (Kurt Nimmo's 'Another Day in the Empire') and follow a trail from sites it linked to, to sites they linked to, and so on. The first stop was 'Scholars for 9/11 Truth'. There I read some articles which claimed that the WTC towers were brought down by controlled explosions, after the planes hit. Reading through them, I could see a certain initial plausibility, undermined by straw men and overlooked points and glaring non sequiturs ... and that site linked to another, which claimed that whatever hit the towers, hijacked airliners didn't ... and from there, it didn't take many one-link hops to get to aliens on Earth, fake Moon landings, and holocaust denial. Uh-oh. Right.

But the controlled demolition claim sent me downstairs to do something I've never done before. On the night of September 11 2001 and the early morning of the following day, I had the TV tuned permanently to news channels and the video set to record. So I blew dust off the box, stuck the tape in and watched every video clip of the planes hitting and the towers falling. Fast-forward through the talking heads on CNN and BBC News 24, play the clips, rewind, slo-mo, fast-forward again ... and I began to see why some people could believe extraordinary claims. Patrick Nielsen Hayden said, on the day, that it was like living in a Ken MacLeod novel (to which I replied that it was like living in a Jack Womack novel). But to many people, then and since, it's been like living in Philip K. Dick novel. You look at the television and you think, *this is not really happening*. And, as I found by replaying the tapes, it *still* looks unreal.

One of the reasons why those of us who watched the news that day were so profoundly shocked was that what we saw didn't match what we expected. It didn't fit what we thought we knew about physics. What it seemed to fit was Hollywood physics, and cartoon physics. I remember saying at the time, 'It looks like a disaster

movie. It looks like a special effect'; and - of the airliner-cross-section-shaped hole in one of the towers - 'It looks like a cartoon ... like when the cat crashes through a fence and leaves a cat-shaped hole'. Even the second airliner flying in - that unforgettable black silhouette - looks like a cardboard cutout. I remember exactly what I imagined when I heard, on the phone, that both towers were down. I had seen the towers just a couple of months earlier, and had recalled the bomb attack of 1993, and - with a shiver on a hot July day - had imagined the towers toppling. That was what I imagined again, when I first heard they'd fallen. Instead, they collapsed straight down. It does sort of look like a controlled demolition. But does that mean it *is* one? No, as we'll see in a moment.

Play, rewind, slo-mo ... when the second tower falls, you *do* see a straight line of flames exploding from a row of windows at the bottom of the section where the collapse starts ... rewind, slo-mo ... just before it moves, you can see a red glow of fire behind the same row of windows. What you're seeing is the fire that gets pushed out, with enormous force, as the floors above fall on it.

One picture I saw on the net troubled me. It shows a woman standing in the airliner-shaped hole, looking out. That, surely, must be faked? A Google search on 'WTC woman photo hoax' didn't turn it up, but it did turn up other 9/11 conspiracy sites. Some of these very convincingly debunked the controlled demolition claim (and the other, wilder claims). The 'official story' of the fall of the towers is one of a real scandal, which is that the steel support of the towers was fire-protected by coverings that turned out to be all too easily blasted or torn off, instead of with concrete cladding. It's concrete cladding that has enabled other skyscrapers to stand worse fires, and its absence that made the towers collapse. Or so *that* story goes.

What was more interesting, to me at that moment, was that these other conspiracy sites - which made yet other inflammatory allegations - argued that some at least of the sites I'd looked at earlier were, by making wild claims and linking to reprehensible or ridiculous views, working consciously or unwittingly to discredit the *real* critical investigations of 9/11. To the serious conspiracy theorist, the crackpot conspiracy theorist is, whether he or she knows it or not, part of the cover-up.

I already knew that conspiracy theory is a wilderness of mirrors. But I needed the reminder. My immediate plot problem is solved, and I can get on with writing - just as soon as I've finished writing this.

The Programme

By Dave Hicks

When it comes to a pedantic obsession with trivia, the average convention membership can hold its own against most challengers. There are few people outside fandom with a greater depth of pedantic and encyclopaedic knowledge of the irrelevant and the obscure, and those of us who work in the civil service have met them. Nevertheless, although many in fandom hold that acquiring this vast mental storehouse of ephemera is a pure art form in its own right, this year you'll be able to profit from it. The committee has decreed that we're going to have a "…big, proper pub quiz, with decent prizes…" So on Saturday night we're thinking of moving the convention wholesale into the programme room, serving drink and testing your knowledge of everything from the career of Anthony Stewart Head to phallic symbolism in the work of Norman Spinrad. Or possibly the other way round.

We'd like to run it on a team, rather than individual basis, so those of you lucky enough to have friends should get together and start thinking of those wacky team names now, which always seems to consume more mental energy than doing the actual quiz.

There won't be an organised disco, so no smoke machine to trigger the fire alarm late at night this year, unless one of the Last Smokers In Fandom ™ can manage to set off a smoke detector. There will, however, be the facility to play music late on Saturday night if anyone's in the mood…

We'll have our Guest of Honour, Ken MacLeod, and the usual array of talented panellists (some of whom will be *you*) to debate the hot topics in science fiction. Ken's just had
Learning The World reviewed in the main part of the Guardian books pull-out. Is science fiction still a discrete genre, and where does it end and fantasy begin, these days? Meanwhile, will I finally organise the "Novacons of the future" panel I've been trying to run since the turn of the century? I'm also curious about the interests that go *around* being a science fiction fan; do we have common ground beyond the genre to sustain us as a group when increasingly SF is something everyone's into to some extent? We will, of course, endeavour to maintain the standard for popular science too, after the various erudite, enlightening or controversial guests we've had over the past few years.

I will struggle manfully to resist the temptation to schedule yet *another* Dr Who panel.

Novacon staples such as the art and book auctions remain – with the usual thrill of whether we'll have far too few or far too many books to sell this year. We're looking at how and where to carry over the auction if we've too much stock this time.

As usual I will plan, recruit and schedule meticulously only for it all to change at the last minute. It was about this time of year - when I first ran the programme - that Nalo Hopkinson asked if she could attend. Last time, Harry Harrison simply arrived unannounced. Who knows what might happen between now and November?

2006 Nova Awards
Steve Green, Administrator

The following fanzines were received by the Nova Awards administrator between 1 October 2005 and 25 June 2006, and are eligible for the 2006 awards, which will be presented at Novacon 36:

?? *A Cry for Help #1* [16pp, A5], John Toon, 118 Great Meadow Road, Bristol, BS32 8DA, <fivemagicbeans@gmail.com>

?? *Ansible #219* [10/05], *#220* [11/05], *#221* [12/05], *#222* [1/06] *#223* [2/03], *#224* [3/06], *#225* [4/06], #226 [5/06], *#227* [6/06; all 2pp, all A4] Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, RG1 5AU, downloadable from <http://www.ansible.co.uk>

?? *Banana Wings #24* [40pp], *#25*, *#26* [both 36pp; all A4], Claire Brialey & Mark Plummer, 59 Shirley Road, Croydon, CR0 7ES, <banana@fishlifter.demon.co.uk>

?? *The Banksoniain #8* [8pp], *#9* [12pp, both A5], David Haddock, 84 Foxhollow, Bar Hill, Cambridge, CB3 8ES, <banksoniain@yahoo.co.uk>

?? *Brum Group News #409* [10/05, 12pp], *#410* [11/05; 12pp], *#411* [12/05, 16pp] *#412* [1/06, 12pp], *#413* [2/06, 12pp], *#414* [3/06, 12pp], *#415* [4/06, 16pp], *#416* [5/06, 12pp], *#417* [6/06, 8pp; all A5], Rog Peyton (for the Birmingham SF Group), 19 Eves Croft, Bartley Green, Birmingham, B32 3QL, <rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk>

?? *Concussed* [8pp, A4], Keith Walker, 6 Vine Street, Greaves, Lancaster, LA1 4UF

?? *FAFIA #1* [3pp], *#2* [5pp], *#3* [4pp], *#4* [2pp; all A4], Peter Sullivan, 1 Englemann Way, Burdon Vale, Sunderland, SR3 2NY, <peter@burdonvale.co.uk>

?? *League of Fan Funds Newsletter #2* [2pp, A4], <www.astralpole.org>

?? *Procrastinations #1* [12pp, A5], John Coxon, 14 Chapel Lane, Peterborough, PE4 6RS, <john.coxon@gmail.com>

?? *Shiny #3* [20pp, A6], Flick, 13 Collette Court, Eleanor Close, London, SE16 6PW, <shiny@internet-fairy.org>

?? *Snapshot #7* [6pp, A4], Ian Sorensen, 3 Portia Place, Motherwell, ML1 1EL <ian@soren.demon.co.uk>

?? *Tortoise #22* [20pp, A5], Sue Jones, Flat 5, 32-33 Castle Street, Shrewsbury, SY1 2BQ <sue.tortoise@btinternet.com>

?? *Zoo Nation #7* [32pp, A5], Pete Young, 62 Walmer Road, Woodley, RG5 4PN, <peter.a.young@macunlimited.net>

In addition, a new issue of *Plokta* was reportedly published in May, but does not appear to have been distributed outside London as yet.

The following have been also received since 1 October 2005, but are ineligible:

?? *The Anatomic Air Review #1, #2* [both 28pp, quarter-quarto], Sinoun Chea, 2090a Highway 317 #239, Suwanee, GA 30024, USA, <nuonis@gmail.com>

?? *Chunga #11* [34pp, quarto], Andy Hooper, Randy Byers & Carl Juarez, 1013 North 36th Street, Seattle, WA 98103, USA, <fringefaan@yahoo.com>

?? *Concussed* [48pp, A4], Bridget Bradshaw, Farah Mendlesohn & Peter Young for Concussion, the 57th British National Science Fiction Convention

?? *Concussion Programme Book* [68pp, A4], Bridget Bradshaw, Farah Mendlesohn & Martin McGrath for Concussion, the 57th British National Science Fiction Convention

?? *Data Dump #93*, *#94*, *#96*, *#97* [all 4pp, A5], 70p (or US$2.00) from Steve Sneyd, 4 Nowell Place, Almondbury, Huddersfield, HD5 8PB

?? *Fanzine Fanatique* [4pp, A4], Keith & Rosemary Walker, address as above [this issue is dated “autumn 2005” and appears to have been published prior to 1 October]

?? *I Must Be Nuts* [4pp, quarto], Colin Hinz, 148 Howland Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, M5R 3B5, Canada, <asfi@eol.ca> or <asfi235@gmail.com>

?? *It Takes All Kinds #2* [20pp, half-legal], Misty O’Brien, 740 14th Street South #23, St Cloud, MN 56301, USA, <misty@bravegirlstudio.net>

?? *Littlebrook #5* [18pp, quarto], Jerry Kaufman & Suzanne Tompkins, PO Box 25075, Seattle, WA 98165, USA

?? *Novacon 35 Programme Book* [39pp, A5], Helena Bowles (for Novacon 35)

?? *Novacon 35 Progress Report #3* [20pp, A5], Helena Bowles (for Novacon 35)

?? *Novacon 36 Progress Report #1* [19pp, A5], Helena Bowles (for Novacon 36), <www.novacon.org>

?? *Opuntia #59.3*, *#59.5*, *#60*, *#60.1* [16pp, half-quarto], Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, T2P 2E7, Canada

?? *Twenty-Three Skidoo #1* [4pp, quarto], Catherine Crockett & Colin Hinz (for Corflu 23), <www.corflu.org>

?? *Two Year TAFF-Life #1* [4pp, quarto], Suzanne Tompkins (for the TransAtlantic Fan Fund), address as above

?? *Vanamonde #608 – 642* [all 2pp, all quarto], John Hertz, 236 S. Coronado Street #409, Los Angeles, CA 90057, USA

?? *Watershed #1* [8pp], #2 [6pp, both quarto; the latter is wrongly dated 2006], Andrew Hooper & Carrie Root, 11032 30th Avenue NE, Seattle, WA 98125, USA, <fanmailaph@aol.com> or <carrieroot@excite.com>

Material for listing in future Novacon progress reports and on the Nova Awards ballot form should be sent to: 33 Scott Road, Olton, Solihull, B92 7LQ.

HOTEL INFORMATION.

The venue is the **Quality Hotel, Bentley, Walsall**, which is situated next to junction 10 of the M6. The nearest railway station is Walsall, and the nearest Intercity station is Wolverhampton. Full travel details will appear in PR3.

The Quality has 150 twin/double rooms and no singles. However a number of the rooms will be released to us as singles, but these are limited and so if you particularly want a single **please book early** as they will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

ROOM RATES:

Twin/doubles: £36 per person per night.
Singles: £48 p.p.p.n.
Both include full English breakfast

There are also a number of suites which are suitable as family rooms. Children aged 5-12 years will be charged at £10 per night inc. breakfast, while children under 5 years will be accommodated free of charge.

BREAKFAST:

We have arranged with the hotel that breakfast vouchers will be issued this year. If you miss breakfast the voucher will entitle you to a free baguette from the bar.

LEISURE FACILITIES:

All residents will be entitled to full use of the hotel's Leisure Club facilities including swimming pool, spa-bath, sauna, gymnasium and solarium (hopefully, all will be fully functional this year!).

DUPLICATE ROOM KEYS:

For those of you sharing a room the hotel can provide each person with a room key, but please let us know in advance. This does not apply to suites, which have a different type of lock to the rest of the rooms and don't allow

the hotel to make copies. If you each want a key **let the hotel know on arrival** as they will be programming a number of rooms to take duplicate keys in advance of the convention and buying in key sets especially for us. Once you have a key each don't lose it! If you do then a new set of keys will have to be issued, and your sharer's key won't work anymore as soon as you use your new one. Of course if you do not have a key each and you can't find your sharer, you can still get into the room by asking hotel reception to let you in with a Master key, but please don't get them doing this all the time. The hotel will need to see your key card as proof of identity, so carry it at all times. You may also need it to charge drinks to your room, and at breakfast.

OVERFLOW HOTELS:

For those of you who want a single, but don't book in time, or those of you who are strapped for cash, there is an overflow hotel nearby. This is the **Travel Inn**, 10 minutes' walk away from the Quality. Rooms are currently £48.95 Mon-Thurs and £45.95 Fri-Sun, **excluding** breakfast. Bear in mind that this rate is for the **room**, regardless of how many people are in it! Many of their rooms will accommodate 2 adults and 2 children. It's up to you to book here and you can visit on www.travelinn.co.uk/TI/index..jsp?page=inn&id=210 or ring on 08701-977-258. Travel Inn, Bentley Green, Bentley Road North, Walsall, West Midlands, WS2 OWB.

Alternatively, you can book a room at the Village Hotel, which is on the other side of the motorway, towards Walsall. Bear in mind that you will have to cross J10 to get to and from here, so think bus or taxi.

CONVENTION STUFF.

NOVACON 36 MEMBERSHIP:
Attending membership is £36.00, until postal registration closes on October 31st 2006. Then it will cost £40.00 on the door. Day rates are £10 Friday, £20 Saturday and £15 Sunday. Full attending membership gets you all convention publications a badge with your name on it and a carrier bag. What more could you ask for? Contact Steve Lawson for any membership or hotel enquiries at
379 Myrtle Rd, Sheffield, S2 3HQ, or call on 0114-281-1572.
Email: xl5@zoom.co.uk

ARTSHOW:
The Artshow this year is being run by Vicky Cook, so if you are planning to exhibit any work get in touch with her at the address shown in the committee profiles to let her know what you need in the way of display area/tables. The CD ROM artshow will also be running, so if you have work in this format which you want to display, send your CDs to Steve Lawson. Artwork can be sold in the convention Auction, with Novacon taking the usual 10% of the sale price.

DEALERS ROOM:
If you want to sell your wares, indicate the number of tables you require on the membership form or alternatively get in touch with Steve Lawson. The cost for the weekend is £20 per table, size 6ft x 2ft 6ins. You have to be a member of the convention to be a dealer.

BEER TASTING AND FOOD:
We hope to be running the usual beer tasting on the Sunday evening along with some hot food. Details nearer the convention.

ADVERTISEMENTS:

To advertise in our publications, the rates are as follows (Fan rates in brackets):

Progress reports:
Full page £35.00 (£15.00)
Half page £17.50 (£9.00)
Quarter page £9.50 (£6.00)

Programme Book:
Full page £80.00 (£35.00)
Half page £50.00 (17.50)
Quarter page £27.50 (£10.50)

Anyone interested in advertising should contact Helena Bowles (Publications) at 38 Harold Road,
Smethwick, West Midlands, B67 6LJ.

Deadlines for camera-ready copy are:

PR3:
30th September, to be mailed mid-October

Programme Book:
30th September, to be distributed at the Convention

The British Fantasy Society is proud to announce:

on: 22nd - 24th September 2006
at: Britannia Hotel, St James Street, Nottingham

Guests of Honour:

Neil Gaiman, Juliet E. McKenna, Ramsey Campbell, Raymond E. Feist and Clive Barker

Master of Ceremonies:

David J. Howe.

FantasyCon is the annual convention of the British Fantasy Society and is a gathering of readers, writers, artists, editors, publishers and fans of the Fantasy, Science Fiction and Horror genres. You can enjoy panels & book launches, meet your favourite authors, take part in a one to one pitch appointment with one of the attending professionals or just sit by the bar and catch up with the latest genre buzz.
One of the highlights of the event is the annual presentation of the British Fantasy Awards - voted on by BFS members.

For more information visit **www.fantasycon.org.uk** or send SAE to FantasyCon 2006, c/o Beech House, Chapel Lane, Moulton, Cheshire, CW9 8PQ